

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
SSM-03 IO-13 ACDA-12 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /100 W
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P R 101600Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7049
INFO SIT-REP COLLECTIVE 344
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USNMR SHAPE BELGIUM
CINCUSNAVEUR, LONDON ENG
CINCUSAFE RAMSTEIN AB GER
COMSIXTHFLT
CTF SIX ZERO
CTF SIX ONE
CTF SIX TWO
CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO
FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA
FOSIF ROTA SPAIN
DIA WASHDC
CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG GER
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1297

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, ASEC, LE
SUBJ: LEBANESE SITUATION MARCH 3-9

REF: BEIRUT 1161 (DTG 031438Z MAR 78)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. TENSION WAS HIGH IN SOUTH LEBANON AS SHELLING
AND FIRING CONTINUED. CHRISTIAN FORCES NEAR MARJAYUN FIRED ON A
U.N. CONVOY, WOUNDING ONE UNITED NATIONS MILITARY OBSERVER.
THE ISRAELIS REPORTEDLY INTERCEPTED A SHIP CARRYING ARMS BOUND
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FOR TYRE. IN BEIRUT CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIAN/LEBANESE LEFTISTS
CLASHED ALONG THE TRADITIONAL CONFRONTATION LINE DIVIDING AYN
AR-RUMANNAH AND SHIYAH. BOMBINGS CONTINUED ON A DAILY BASIS.
DISSIDENT PALESTINIAN LEADER ABU SA'ID WAS ASSASSINATED. THE
ARAB DETERRENT FORCE (ADF) AGAIN REDEPLOYED ITS FORCES IN BEIRUT,
SETTING UP ONE CHECKPOINT NEAR THE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY HEAD-
QUARTERS IN ASHRAFIYAH. THE LEBANESE FRONT ISSUED A STATEMENT

FAILING TO MAKE CLEAR ITS POSITION ON EXTENSION OF THE ADF MAN-DATE. THE HEAD OF THE PRO-SYRIAN BA'ATH PARTY ISSUED A SIX-POINT PROGRAM CALLING IN PART FOR REBUILDING THE LEBANESE ARMY ON A NON-CONFESSIONAL BASIS. THE ARMY DECIDED TO TRANSFER ABOUT 60 OFFICERS INCLUDING ANTOINE BARAKAT, THE COMMANDER OF FAYYADIYAH BARRACKS. SAUDI ARABIA GAVE THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT \$1.7 MILLION. END SUMMARY.

2. SOUTH LEBANON.

A. TENSION WAS HIGH IN SOUTH LEBANON, AS SHELLING AND FIRING CONTINUED. THE PALESTINIANS REMAINED IN CONTROL OF MARUN AR RA'S (SOUTH OF BINT JBAIL) AFTER COUNTERING AN UNSUCCESSFUL CHRISTIAN ATTEMPT TO OCCUPY THE VILLAGE ON MARCH 2. THE CHRISTIANS HAD OCCUPIED THE BORDER TOWN OF BLIDA THE PRECEDING WEEK, AND THE TWO ACTIONS MAY SIGNAL A CHRISTIAN INTENTION TO CREATE A BELT OF CONTROL EXTENDING FROM MARUN AR-RA'S TO MARJAYUN.

B. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS SOURCES, SAIQA PARTICIPATED IN THE FIGHTING OVER MARUN AR RA'S. RELIABLE OBSERVERS REPORTED THAT THE ISRAELIS GAVE DIRECT ARTILLERY SUPPORT TO THE CHRISTIANS IN THE FIGHTING OVER MARUN AR RA'S, BUT THIS WAS CATEGORICALLY DENIED BY THE ISRAELIS. L'ORIENT LE-JOUR ON MARCH 8 QUOTED THE ISRAELI DAILY HAARETZ AS SAYING THAT "THE PRESENCE OF UNITS OF THE (PALESTINIAN) RESISTANCE IN THE VILLAGE OF MARUN AR RA'S... HAS MODIFIED THE STATUS QUO IN THE REGION." THE BEIRUT PAPER COMMENTED THAT AS A CONSEQUENCE OBSERVERS WERE WONDERING IF

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ISRAEL WAS GOING TO "REACT TO ENSURE RESPECT FOR THE RED LINE."

3. CONTINUING HARASSMENT OF UNMO'S.

CHRISTIAN FORCES NEAR MARJAYUN BROUGHT A UN CONVOY UNDER FIRE ON MARCH 7, ACCORDING TO RELIABLE SOURCES (SEPTELS). ONE IRISH UNITED NATIONS MILITARY OBSERVER (UNMO) WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED. THE SAME DAY A PARTY OF EIGHT MEN RETURNED A VEHICLE TO OP HIN WHICH HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY STOLEN FROM IT. ON MARCH 9 SIX ARMED CHRISTIANS TOOK ANOTHER VEHICLE FROM THE SAME OUTPOST, ACCORDING TO A WELL-PLACED SOURCE. THESE AND OTHER RECENT INCIDENTS APPEAR TO BE A SYSTEMATIC CAMPAIGN TO HARASS UNMO'S IN SOUTH LEBANON, WHOSE MORALE HAS SUFFERED SERIOUSLY AS A RESULT.

4. ARMED SHIPMENTS TO TYRE.

ACCORDING TO RIGHTIST LE REVEIL, ON MARCH 10 TWO ISRAELI DESTROYERS AND AN ISRAELI SUBMARINE INTERCEPTED A FREIGHTER LOADED WITH ARMS GOING TOWARDS THE PORT OF TYRE. THE ISRAELI SHIP ESCORTED THE FREIGHTER TO AN ISRAELI PORT, BUT ALLOWED IT TO PROCEED AFTER INSPECTING IT (SEPTEL). PHALANGE RADIO HAD PREVIOUSLY REPORTED THAT UNIDENTIFIED GUNBOATS ON FEB 24 HAD TURNED BACK A SHIP CARRYING WEAPONS AS IT TRIED TO ENTER TYRE

(SEE MARCH 2 SITREP).

5. CLASHES IN AYN AR-RUMANNAH AND SHIYAH.
IN ONE OF THE SHARPEST OUTBURSTS OF SECTARIAN FIGHTING SINCE
THE END OF THE CIVIL WAR IN 1976, CHRISTIANS AND PALESTINIAN/
LEBANESE LEFTIST GUNMEN CLASHED ALONG THE TRADITIONAL CON-
FRONTATION LINE DIVIDING AYN AR-RUMANNAH AND SHIYAH THE NIGHT
OF MARCH 4-5. ADF SYRIAN SOLDIERS INTERVENED TO STOP THE
FIGHTING, ALTHOUGH THERE WAS SOME SNIPING ON MARCH 6. BY MARCH 7
SUDANESE ADF TROOPS HAD TAKEN UP POSITIONS IN THE AREA, AND
TRAFFIC AND BUSINESS RETURNED TO NORMAL. LOCAL GANGS IN THE AREA
HAVE ACQUIRED CONSIDERABLY GREATER FREEDOM OF ACTION SINCE THE
FAYYADIYAH FIGHTING AND MORE INCIDENTS ARE LIKELY.

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6. OTHER VIOLENCE.
BOMBINGS CONTINUED ON A DAILY BASIS. ON MARCH 1 AN EX-
PLOSIVE CHARGE WENT OFF IN TARSHISH, DESTROYING A CONFECTIONARY
SHOP AND SOME CARS BUT CAUSING NO CASUALTIES, ACCORDING TO THE
PHALANGIST VOICE OF LEBANON. ON MARCH 3 EXPLOSIVE EXPERTS
DEFUSED A GRENADE SET TO GO OFF ON SADAT STREET IN WEST BEIRUT,
ACCORDING TO PRESS REPORTS. ON MARCH 7 AN AUTOMOBILE WAS
BLOWN UP IN ASHRAFIYAH, CAUSING MATERIAL DAMAGE BUT NO
CASUALTIES, ACCORDING TO THE VOICE OF LEBANON.

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7. ABU SA'ID ASSASSINATED.

DISSIDENT PALESTINIAN LEADER ABU SA'ID DIED ON MARCH 8 FROM WOUNDS RECEIVED THE DAY BEFORE WHEN HIS CAR WAS AMBUSHED AT THE DAHR AL-BAYDAR PASS ON THE BEIRUT-DAMASCUS ROAD (SEPTTEL). SA'ID WAS THE LEADER OF FATAH AL-THAWRA, ORIGINALLY A SYRIAN SPONSORED PALESTINIAN FACTION WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO RIVAL FATAH FOR LEADERSHIP BUT WHICH NEVER ACQUIRED ANY SIGNIFICANT FOLLOWING. SYRIA HAD DROPPED ITS SUPPORT FOR FATAH AL-THAWRA AFTER SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM, HOWEVER.

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8. ADF REDEPLOYMENT.

A. ON MARCH 2 AND 3 THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE (ADF) AGAIN REDEPLOYED AND REGROUPED ITS FORCES IN BEIRUT. AN ADF COMMUNIQUE SAID THE MOVE WAS TO SUPPORT THE LEBANESE INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES AND TO INCREASE THE ADF'S EFFECTIVENESS IN PRESERVING LAW AND ORDER.

B. ONE ADF CHECKPOINT WAS SET UP NEAR THE NATIONAL LIBERAL PARTY HQS IN ASHRAFIYAH, AND SOME CHRISTIANS HAVE INTERPRETED THE REDEPLOYMENT AS BEING AIMED AT THEM. FOREIGN MINISTER BOUTROS, HOWEVER, TOLD THE PRESS THAT "THESE ARE ROUTINE MEASURES."

C. IN THE LATEST REDEPLOYMENT, THE ADF HAS REDUCED FURTHER THE NUMBER OF CHECKPOINTS IN THE CITY, A PROCESS BEGUN DURING THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENTS.

9. LEBANESE FRONT WARNING.

A. IN A STATEMENT READ TO THE PRESS IN THE NAME OF THE LEBANESE FRONT ON MARCH 8, FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN WARNED THAT OBSTRUCTION OF THE RIYADH AND CAIRO ACCORDS MIGHT "LEAD TO GRAVE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCES MUST BE AWARE." HE RECALLED THAT THESE ACCORDS PROVIDED THAT THE ADF SHOULD OPERATE UNDER THE DIRECT COMMAND OF THE LEBANESE GOVT AND SUPERVISE THE WITHDRAWAL OF ARMED ELEMENTS TO THE POSITIONS THEY HAD HELD BEFORE APRIL 12, 1975.

B. CHAMOUN CHARGED THAT THE RIYADH AND CAIRO ACCORDS HAD NOT

BEEN IMPLEMENTED BECAUSE OF "CONFUSION" OVER THEIR AIMS WHICH "MAINLY CAME FROM ARAB QUARTERS." HE SAID THAT SOME ARAB STATES WERE "ACTIVELY SENDING MEN AND WEAPONS TO THE SOUTH," AND HE WARNED THAT OBSTRUCTION OF THE ACCORDS WOULD "LEAD TO GRAVE CONSEQUENCES OF WHICH THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCES MUST BE AWARE." C. THE STATEMENT EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THE SYRIAN INITIATIVE IN LEBANON, BU DID NOT SPECIFICALLY ASK FOR AN EXTENSION OF THE ADF MANDATE. LEFTIST AS SAFIR SAID THE FRONT HAD BEEN UNABLE TO TAKE A STAND ON THIS ISSUE BECAUSE SULAYMAN FRANJIYAH
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FAVORED AN UNCONDITIONAL EXTENSION, WHILE CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND PIERRE GEMAYEL WANTED TO LIMIT THE ADF'S ROLE. THE FRONT PLANS TO DISCUSS THIS ISSUE FURTHER ON MARCH 14.

10. PROPOSALS OF BA'ATH LEADER.

A. ON MARCH 3 THE LEADER OF THE PRO-SYRIAN BA'ATH PARTY IN LEBANON, ASIM QANSUH, ISSUED A SIX-POINT PROGRAM CALLING FOR:
-- DISARMING ALL CIVILIANS;
-- DISMANTLING THE CURRENT LEBANESE ARMY AND BUILDING A NEW ARMY ON A NON-CONFESSIONAL BASIS;
-- WORKING OUT NEW ARRANGEMENTS FOR LEBANESE CO-EXISTENCE WITH THE PLO;
-- RE-ESTABLISHING THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEBANESE STATE IN SOUTH LEBANON;
-- DISBANDING ALL MILITIA AND BRINGING THEIR LEADERS TO TRIAL;
-- FRIENDSHIP WITH THE ARAB STATES, PARTICULARLY SYRIA.
B. THE SECOND POINT WAS CENSORED FROM THE LOCAL PRESS. AN ISRAELI IDF SOURCE COMMENTED THAT THE "MERE ANNOUNCEMENT POSES A THREAT TO THE CHRISTIAN CAMP" (SEE IR 6 849 0197 78).

11. NEW ARMY ASSIGNMENTS.

A. THE ARMY COMMAND ON MARCH 8 TRANSFERRED ABOUT 60 OFFICERS EFFECTIVE MARCH 15 (REFTEL). COLONEL EMILE KALLAS IS TO REPLACE ANTOINE BARAKAT AS COMMANDER OF FAYYADIYAH BARRACKS, COLONEL ROGER FEGHALI TO REPLACE COLONEL ANTOINE LAHAD AS COMMANDER OF SARBA BARRACKS, AND MAJOR KHAZEN AL-KHAZEN TO REPLACE MAJOR IBRAHIM TANNOUS AS COMMANDER OF BATTALION TASK FORCE 31 IN RUMYAH.
B. THE THREE OFFICERS BEING REPLACED ARE WIDELY REGARDED AS CHRISTIAN EXTREMISTS. KALLAS APPEARS TO BE AN OFFICER THE PRESIDENT CAN COUNT ON, BUT ROGER FEGHALI AND KHAZEN AL-KHAZEN SEEM TO BE MORE OF THE SAME.

12. SAUDI GIFTS.

SAUDI ARABIAN AMBASSADOR ALI AL-CHA'ER ON MARCH 4 GAVE DR. HAROLD HOELSCHER, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT,
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887,362 POUNDS STERLING (\$1.7 MILLION) FOR THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL. HOELSCHER HAD RECENTLY RETURNED FROM A VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA. SAEB SALAM ANNOUNCED THE SAME DAY THAT THE SAUDIS HAD GIVEN LL 30 MILLION (\$13 MILLION) TO THE MAKASSID SOCIETY, AN IMPORTANT ISLAMIC PHILANTHROPIC ORGANIZATION. SALAM HAD RETURNED TO BEIRUT ON MARCH 3 AFTER A TWO WEEKS' VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA, WHERE HE MET WITH KING KHALID, CROWN PRINCE FAHD AND OTHER SAUDI LEADERS.
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